

# 2009 Professional Staff Congress/CUNY Questionnaire for NYC Candidates

Candidate for **City Council**  
(Borough President, City Council, Comptroller, District Attorney, Mayor, Public Advocate,)

City Council District: **25**

Borough: **Queens**

Name: **Daniel Dromm**

Campaign Address: **77-15 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue**

**Jackson Heights, NY 11372**

Telephone #: **(718) 205-1385**

Email Address: [melody@danieldromm.com](mailto:melody@danieldromm.com) (campaign manager, Melody Lopez)

Political Party Affiliation: **Democrat, Working Families**

Occupation: **NYC Public School Teacher**

Current Employment / Employer: **NYC Dept of Education, PS-199Q**

Are you an incumbent: Yes **No X** Number of years in office: **n/a**

Under the current term limits law, how many more additional terms, after this one, will you be able to serve? **Three terms total. Two additional terms beyond the 2009-2013 term.**

Education:

High School: **St. Mary's High School Manhasset, NY**

College: **Marist College, Bachelor of Arts, Double Major in Journalism and Spanish**

Graduate / Professional: **CUNY City College, Master of Science, Education**

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1. I received support to pay for college from:  
(Please check all that apply)

- Pell Grant
- NYS Tuition Assistance Program**
- Scholarship
- Student Loans**
- Family**
- Self**
- Other Need-Based Grants**
- Work Study Program**

2. In my view, paying for public higher education (CUNY) should primarily be the responsibility of:  
(check only one)

- Students
- Parents / Family
- Government**
- Employers
- All of the above

(Please attach additional sheets as necessary to answer the following questions.)

3. Public funding to public higher education has fallen sharply over the last two decades. Since 1991, NY State funding per student for CUNY senior colleges fell 14% and, for CUNY community colleges, it fell by 25.6%.<sup>1</sup> Though NY City began to restore funding to CUNY community colleges five years ago, proposed budget cuts this year will eliminate this advance. What would you do to increase public investment in CUNY?

**I am a strong supporter of public investment in CUNY. I am a New York City public school teacher with 25 years of experience. I understand first-hand how vitally important the CUNY system is to our City. CUNY provides thousands of students the opportunity to further their education. We must do everything in our power to increase public funding for CUNY. I am an advocate for a more progressive income tax structure. The most obvious place to start would be to raise personal income tax rates on the highest income earners. A one percent increase on individuals making more than \$250,000 per year will provide a significant amount of funding for CUNY. I also support closing corporate tax loopholes which have been abused by companies seeking to avoid paying their fair share. I strongly believe that the Commuter Tax needs to be re-instated to compensate New York City for the services it provides for commuter, which in turn would free up funds for CUNY.**

4. More than 50% of CUNY students come from households with annual income below \$40,000, but students will pay 15% more on average next year to attend a CUNY senior college and 14% more to attend a community college if tuition hikes go through. Overall, student tuition makes up 40% of CUNY's total operating revenue and the CUNY Master Plan ("CUNY Compact") calls for regular, annual tuition hikes.

4a. Do you support or oppose the current tuition increases? **OPPOSE**

4b. Do you support or oppose the CUNY Compact's call for annual tuition increases? **OPPOSE**

4c. What would you do to relieve the burden on students and families to pay for CUNY?

**I understand that the burden to pay for CUNY is too great on students and families. As a City Council Member, I will strong advocate for increased public funding for CUNY. With increased revenues from a more progressive income tax code, closing corporate tax loopholes, and re-instituting the Commuter Tax, the City will be able to provide more funding for CUNY. I would also advocate for increased federal and state funding for the CUNY system of colleges and universities. Public education is the bedrock of our society. We must provide the necessary resources for our public higher education system to be accessible and successful.**

4d. Some economists argue that earning a college degree enables a student to get a good-paying job upon graduation, and, therefore, government policy should be structured around an expectation

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<sup>1</sup> Fiscal Policy Institute Report: "New York State's Underinvestment in Public Higher Education," January 15, 2009

of students to finance their education by taking out loans. Do you agree or disagree with a higher education financing policy that is structured around students taking out loans to finance tuition increases? Why or why not?

**Although I agree that earning a college degree would likely enable a student to obtain higher-paying employment, I disagree with the expectation that students should finance their own education. The best economic development program in the world is higher education. As our nation, and in particular our City, faces the current economic crisis, we should be putting more public funding into higher education to expand and re-train our workforce. This begins with a smarter and fairer education financing policy that increases the government's contribution to higher education. As a City Council Member, I will advocate for more grants for students. Loans for students should be pursued as a last resort.**

5. CUNY enrollments are higher than at any other time in its history, but in 1975 (the last enrollment peak), CUNY had 11,500 full-time faculty and now it has 6,800. Similarly, there has been a decline in the number of professional and support staff. CUNY now has 9,000 adjunct faculty and 1,000 adjunct professional staff who are part-time and low-paid. The dramatic decline of the full-time workforce and reliance on an exploited and over-stretched part-time workforce compromises the quality of education and the University's ability to deliver educational services to students.

- 5a. What specific policies would you advocate to provide CUNY with the resources to hire more full-time faculty, counselors, professional and other staff?

**I will advocate for increased funding for CUNY as a City Council Member. With increased revenues from a more progressive income tax code, closing corporate tax loopholes, and re-instituting the Commuter Tax, the City will be able to provide more funding for CUNY. I would also advocate for increased federal and state funding for the CUNY system of colleges and universities. I also believe that the CUNY administration needs to put more resources back into the classroom by re-evaluating non-education expenses within the CUNY bureaucracy. New York State and City should look to other municipalities like Texas and Virginia as examples of more sustainable public financing arrangements.**

- 5b. What specific policies would you advocate to improve the wages and working conditions of part-time adjunct faculty and staff that currently provide half the instruction at CUNY?

**As a New York City Council Member, I will advocate for improving wages and working conditions of part-time adjunct faculty and staff. I support providing unemployment insurance to part-time faculty and staff during summer months, or in between academic semesters. I also support increasing the number of conversion lines to provide a pathway to full-time status for part-time faculty. The greatest resources we have in higher education are our quality faculty members. We must have policies that will enhance their ability to teach.**

6. What are your views on New York City's current tax structure? If you are elected, what specific tax and revenue policies would you advocate?

**Stark inequality is sadly a fact of life in New York City and it doesn't have to be. A more progressive income tax code is a policy that I will advocate for in the New York City Council. I also support closing corporate tax loopholes to ensure that companies pay their fair share. I will also fight to re-instate the Commuter Tax.**

7. What fiscal policies would you advocate to help New York City maintain public services during the current recession?

**I will advocate for fairer and more sustainable fiscal policies as a City Council Member during this economic recession. I will work to create a more progressive income tax code. I support closing corporate tax loopholes and I support re-instating the Commuter Tax.**

8. In your view, where does CUNY stand, as a priority, in New York's economic development and economic recovery?

**Higher education, and CUNY specifically, stands as a top priority in New York's economic development and economic recovery. Higher education provides the best job creation program possible. Increasing public funding to CUNY is the smartest way to speed up our economy recovery and to improve the economic development over the long term.**

9. Academic freedom is important because adherence to it allows colleges and universities to best serve the public interest. For this reason, the university must be a place where all ideas, even those that are unpopular, may be freely expressed and debated without interference from management, trustees or public officials. Yet, for short-term political advantage, politicians have undermined academic freedom by publicly attacking unpopular speech by faculty and calling for punitive action by college or university managements. Such public calls go beyond simple disagreement.

- 9a. Do you agree that it is necessary to uphold academic freedom at CUNY and other colleges and universities? Will you agree to avoid taking unfair political advantage of unpopular speech on campuses?

**I agree to avoid taking unfair political advantage of unpopular speech on campuses. College campuses are for debate and critical inquiry not political grandstanding. I will not interfere with legitimate academic activities.**

- 9b. Academic freedom also extends to pedagogical practices, academic standards and curriculum and program decisions. Who do you believe is best placed to make determinations about these matters: faculty, college administrators, community organizations, private businesses, or public officials?

**Academic freedom is essential to our democracy. Faculty members are the best persons to determine pedagogical practices, academic standards, curriculum, and most program decisions. I believe that other voices and opinions should be incorporated into the discussion but that at the end of the day, faculty members are better placed to make the necessary determinations.**

10. Do you believe that public employees should have the same right to strike as private employees? Please explain?

**Yes, I believe that public employees should have the same right to strike as private employees. I am in support of major revisions to the Taylor Law. As we saw the 2005 transit strike, government agencies may have very little incentive to negotiate a contract in a timely manner if they choose not to, since strikes by public employees are currently illegal. If the state is going to deny public employees the right to strike, then it must similarly require that their employers negotiate contracts in good faith and in a timely manner. Public employees should have the same negotiating resources as private employees.**

11. In general, public employees have had more generous health and pension benefits than private employees. Some politicians have used this disparity to argue for a diminution of public employee benefits and blamed New York's fiscal problems on such benefits. Do you believe public employees' health and pension benefits should be maintained, reduced, or enhanced? Please be as specific as possible.

**I am a strong supporter of enhancing health and pension benefits for public employees. I believe that health care is a universal human right. I hope and expect that in the very near future universal single-payer health care will be a fact in our country. Until then, I support full health benefits for public employees. I also am a vocal supporter of solid pension benefits for public employees so that they can retire with the necessary resources to provide for their well-being.**

12. Incumbents, please list your committee and subcommittee memberships and indicate if you are chair:

**Not applicable.**

13. Please list the bills you have introduced or co-sponsored in support of CUNY and higher education, or other actions you have taken in this cause:

**Not applicable.**

14. Please list other legislation that you have introduced or co-sponsored in the last two legislative sessions:

**Not applicable.**

15. Please describe other actions you have taken in support of union-related initiatives:

**I am a dedicated member and supporter of the labor movement. I am a UFT Chapter Leader for 10 years. I was a UFT Delegate for six years before that. I currently enforce the UFT contract on a daily basis. I have been given a number of awards from the UFT because of my commitment to the union movement including the UFT's highest award for political involvement - the Marsh-Raimo Award. I have attended almost every UFT demonstration over the last 25 years. I am an elected delegate to the NYSUT and the AFT conventions. I collected union membership cards from home day care providers in a campaign run by the UFT and ACORN. I have participated in a number of other union demonstrations like 32BJ's demonstrations last winter '07 and spring '08 and UAW's demonstrations against NYU. I also organized a large contingent of teachers for the Fair Share Rally this past year. Because of my commitment to labor, the UFT gave me a very early endorsement in June 08 even though other teachers are running for City Council this year.**

Return completed questionnaire and brief personal biography to:

Professional Staff Congress / CUNY  
61 Broadway, Suite 1500  
New York, New York 10006  
(212) 354-1252  
Fax: (212) 302-7815  
Attention: Amanda Magalhaes  
[amagalhaes@pscmail.org](mailto:amagalhaes@pscmail.org)

We encourage you to send the questionnaire and attachments via email or by fax.

## **Brief Daniel Dromm Biography:**

Daniel Dromm is an educator, community organizer, union leader, and political activist. His experience and dedication to the community has led to Dromm being overwhelming elected Democratic District Leader in the 39th Assembly District (Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, Corona and Woodside in Queens) in 2002 and re-elected in 2004, 2006, and 2008.

Daniel Dromm is an award-winning New York City public school teacher. Since 1984, he has instructed and inspired thousands of students at PS 199Q in Queens. In 2006, Dromm was chosen as "Outstanding Teacher of the Year" by his school's principal and in 2009, he was chosen as "Educator of the Year" by the Kiwanis Club of Sunnyside.

Deeply committed to civil rights and social justice, Dromm has established himself a fighter against prejudice, discrimination and violence as the founder and former co-chairperson of the Queens Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee. Fifteen years ago, he organized the first Queens LGBT Pride Parade and Festival which he still puts on the first Sunday in June in Jackson Heights. Dromm co-founded the Queens Chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG). He helped found Queens Pride House. Dromm also co-founded the Generation Q Youth Services Program in Astoria and the Sage Senior Center in Queens.

Dromm is fluent in Spanish and has been honored by the Sociedad Puertorriquena de Queens for his commitment to the Latino community. He is a member of the NAACP - Corona/East Elmhurst branch and has also been honored by the Korean-American Association of Central Queens.

Daniel Dromm strongly believes that in order to bring about change, one must affect the political structure. To that end, Dromm's latest initiative is creating the New Visions Democratic Club, a progressive local party club dedicated to serve our diverse community. Dromm has presided over an incredible expansion in membership of New Visions since 2007. It is creating change that motivates Daniel Dromm to run for City Council.